

The Most Tattooed Man in the World

What would you think if you were walking down the street and passed a man covered entirely in leopard spots? It would probably make you look twice and would qualify as a deviant appearance in most of the world. Would you wonder what he was thinking, how it felt to live within those spots, and why he would choose such a visible form of body modification? Tom Leppard once held the title of the most tattooed man in the world, with 99% of his body covered in tattooed leopard spots. For more than 20 years, Leppard lived as something of a hermit in a shack with no electricity or furniture on the Scottish island of Skye. Despite his solitary lifestyle, Leppard clearly enjoyed the attention of strangers, at least to some degree. He spoke of choosing his leopard appearance and his visible status: “I’ve loved every minute and when you’re covered in leopard tattoos you certainly get noticed—I became a bit of a tourist attraction on Skye” (Irvine, 2008, para. 7).



Mike MOORE/Mirrorpix/Newscom

Introduction

Now that you’ve been introduced to the concept of deviance and the importance of understanding deviant behavior from a theoretical perspective, we want to spend some time exploring the various forms that deviance can take. When you think about deviance, what do you typically think about? Take a moment to quickly think of five types of deviant behavior. What immediately comes to mind? You probably came up with examples that reflect criminal behavior, such as drug dealing, assault, robbery, or homicide. These are quite common responses, especially given the way the media cover crime and deviance. Yet deviance is not always criminal in nature. Nor does it always reflect an act or a behavior. There is a much broader array of what constitutes deviance in our society. In short, deviance can take many forms.

Photo 2.1
What would you think if you were at the grocery store and ran into Tom Leppard, who has tattooed leopard spots over 99% of his body?

In this chapter, we discuss the diversity and relativity of deviance and explore its many manifestations in American society. It is our hope that by introducing you to deviance in its varied forms, you'll gain a deeper understanding of its nature before we move on to learning about how deviance is researched (Chapter 3), explained (Chapters 4–10), and responded to both in American society and in a global context (Chapters 11–12). This chapter on the different types of deviance is a good place to begin an analysis of the sociological field of deviance and the phenomena it investigates.

A chapter on types of deviance is difficult to write because deviance as a field of study is very subjective. Many textbooks offer a survey or overview of different types of deviant behavior, devoting entire chapters to such topics as **physical deviance**, **sexual deviance**, drug use, mental disorders, and corporate deviance. As authors of this text, we do not necessarily agree with those categories or characterizations of different behaviors, attitudes, and physical attributes as deviant. Rather than writing simply from our own points of view and trying to persuade you to adopt our perspectives, however, in this chapter, we offer a glimpse into the field of deviance as it has been defined, studied, and treated throughout the years.

Deviance and Its Varied Forms

While deviant behavior and crime certainly overlap, deviance encompasses much more than crime. Sociologists who have studied deviance have researched and written about a range of topics, including the disabled (E. Goffman, 1963), the mentally ill (B. Link, Phelan, Bresnahan, Stueve, & Pescosolido, 1999), the voluntarily childless (K. Park, 2002), the homeless (L. Anderson, Snow, & Cress, 1994), Jewish resisters during the Holocaust (Einwohner, 2003), topless dancers (Thompson, Harred, & Burks, 2003), bisexuals (Weinberg, Williams, & Pryor, 2001), anorexics and bulimics (McLorg & Taub, 1987), self-injurers (P. A. Adler & P. Adler, 2007), and gay male Christian couples (Yip, 1996), to name just a few. This research is in addition to the many studies of criminal deviance, too numerous to list here. You can get a sense of the range of deviant behavior and how it has been studied simply by exploring the contents of the academic journal that is devoted to this very topic: *Deviant Behavior*. In addition to this introductory chapter exploring the many forms of deviance, we include short summaries of recent research on different types of deviant behavior in each chapter of this book.

The diversity of deviance and how drastically norms and attitudes may change over time is attested to in research conducted by J. L. Simmons (1965), who, several decades ago, surveyed 180 individuals, asking them to “list those things or types of persons whom you regard as deviant” (p. 223). More than 250 different acts and persons were listed. The range of responses not only included expected items

Table 2.1 Most Frequent Responses to the Question, “What Is Deviant?”

Response	Percentage
Homosexuals	49
Drug addicts	47
Alcoholics	46
Prostitutes	27
Murderers	22
Criminals	18
Lesbians	13
Juvenile delinquents	13
Beatniks	12
Mentally ill	12
Perverts	12
Communists	10
Atheists	10
Political extremists	10

Source: Simmons (1965).

such as prostitutes, drug addicts, and murderers but also liars, Democrats, reckless drivers, atheists, the self-pitied, career women, divorcées, prudes, pacifists, and even know-it-all professors! The most frequent survey responses are listed in Table 2.1.

Imagine conducting a similar survey today. Which responses from this list might still occur with some frequency? Which might be less frequent? Whatever you imagined, there is little doubt that the list would look different today compared with 1965, reflecting the key point that what constitutes deviance changes depending on the historical context, something we discuss more later on in this chapter. For now, we want you to simply recognize the sheer range of deviance and its diversity.

It would be nearly impossible to describe deviance in *all* its varied forms. Rather than try to provide an exhaustive list of the different realms of deviance, we have chosen to highlight a few to illustrate the broad spectrum of behaviors, attitudes, and characteristics that have been deemed deviant by at least some segments of the larger society.

Strict Conformity as Deviance

A student film, *55: A Meditation on the Speed Limit*, which can be viewed on YouTube (www.youtube.com/watch?v=1B-OxOZmVIU), illustrates a potential problem with strict conformity. In the five-minute video, college students filmed an experiment where they managed to have cars in every lane of the freeway driving

exactly the speed limit. This created a wall of traffic and frustrated drivers in the cars behind them, leading to visible road rage. Do you think strict conformity can also be a form of deviance? Why or why not? Can you think of other circumstances in which strict conformity might be considered deviant?

Physical Deviance and Appearance: Ideals of Beauty, Self-Harm, and Body Modification

Physical deviance is perhaps the most visible form of deviance, and it can evoke stereotypes, **stigma**, and discrimination. Sociologists have described two types of physical deviance: (1) violations of aesthetic norms (what people should look like, including height, weight, and the absence or presence of disfigurement) and (2) physical incapacity, which would include those with a physical disability (Goode, 2005).

Erving Goffman (1963) opens his book *Stigma* with a letter a 16-year-old girl wrote to Miss Lonelyhearts in 1962. The young girl writes about how she is a good dancer and has a nice shape and pretty clothes, but no boy will take her out. Why? Because she was born without a nose.

I sit and look at myself all day and cry. I have a big hole in the middle of my face that scares people even myself. . . . What did I do to deserve such a terrible bad fate? Even if I did do some bad things, I didn't do any before I was a year old and I was born this way. . . . Ought I commit suicide? (reprinted in E. Goffman, 1963, first page)

As suggested by the letter to Miss Lonelyhearts, physical deviance may be viewed as a marker of other forms of deviance. In other words, passersby may notice people with numerous tattoos, heavily muscled female bodybuilders, or those with visible physical disabilities and may attribute other characteristics to those individuals. You may notice, for example, when talking to a person who is hard of hearing that others in the conversation may slow their speech considerably, use smaller words, and speak louder than usual; this suggests an implicit assumption that the individual has difficulty understanding as well as hearing.

Our ideas of what is acceptable or desirable in terms of physical appearance vary widely, depending on the context. You can get a sense of this by visiting a local museum or simply flipping through an art book showing paintings and photographs of women thought to be very beautiful in their time. From the rounded curves of the women painted by Peter Paul Rubens in the 1600s (which is where the term *Rubenesque* originated to describe an hourglass figure) to the very thin flappers considered ideal in the 1920s to Marilyn Monroe in the 1950s, Twiggy in the 1960s, Cindy Crawford in the 1980s, Kate Moss in the 1990s, and Kim Kardashian in 2010, our ideals of beauty and the most desired body types clearly change and evolve over time.

Along with professionally styled hair and makeup and the use of meticulous lighting and camera angles, editors can now touch up photographs to remove wrinkles and traces of cellulite and to make beautiful models' already thin limbs and waists trimmer and more defined. This is of concern to sociologists because setting a truly unattainable standard for the ideal physical appearance can lead to deviant behavior, including harmful eating disorders, such as anorexia nervosa or bulimia, or unnecessary plastic surgeries.

Perhaps the most recent iteration of unrealistic ideals and expectations of beauty is what plastic surgeons have termed "Snapchat dysmorphia," a condition in which people want to alter their physical appearance so that they look like their own filtered and altered selfies. A CNN story quoted Dr. Patrick Byrne, director of the Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Department at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, explaining how social media and selfies have changed the perception of reality for younger generations:

The experience of younger humans in particular in this regard, how they relate to their own appearance, is so profoundly different than at any other point in time. . . . We used to have photographs, of course, but we gazed upon them and thought about them infrequently. Now, we're in this world where people are exposed to their own facial image thousands of times per year. (Willingham, 2018)

Plastic surgeons have seen a notable uptick in patients coming in wanting to look better in their selfies.

Another form of physical deviance is **self-injury**—cutting, burning, branding, scratching, picking at skin or reopening wounds, biting, hair pulling, and bone breaking. Patricia A. Adler and Peter Adler (2007) found that most self-injurers never seek help from mental health professionals and that most of the self-incurred wounds do not need medical attention; thus, the majority of self-injurers remain hidden within society. Why would anyone purposely hurt him- or herself? Adler and Adler explain the reasoning behind this:

Although self-injury can be morbid and often maladaptive, our subjects overwhelmingly agree that it represents an attempt at self-help. They

claim that their behaviors provide immediate but short-term release from anxiety, depersonalization, racing thoughts, and rapidly fluctuating emotions. . . . It provides a sense of control, reconfirms the presence of one's body, dulls feelings, and converts unbearable emotional pain into manageable physical pain. (p. 540)

Adler and Adler (2007) suggest that self-injury is currently being “demedicalized”—shifted out of the realm of mental illness and categorized instead as deviance, characterized by the voluntary choice of those involved. We will return to the idea of the medicalization—or demedicalization—of deviance in our discussion of the social control of deviance in Chapter 11.

Adler and Adler's argument that self-injury is now viewed as a form of personal expression was supported in a study of nonsuicidal women at a small, liberal arts women's college. Kokaliari and Berzoff (2008) found that 91 of the 166 participants in their survey—more than 50% of respondents—reported purposely injuring themselves, including scratching, cutting, burning, self-hitting, and self-biting. The researchers conducted interviews with 10 of the college women and found that the women had been raised to be self-sufficient, independent, and in control. Emotions were often discouraged in their families. Many of the women described their use of self-injury as a “quick fix” to alleviate difficult or painful emotions and allow them to continue being productive in their daily lives.

While there are certainly other forms of physical deviance, **body modification** is the last example we will discuss. Body modification includes extreme tattooing, like Mr. Leppard from the opening story, who paid to have more than 99% of his body covered in inked leopard spots. Mr. Leppard is not alone in his love of extreme tattoos: The most heavily tattooed people in the world are often referred to by the image their tattoos portray—the list includes “Cat Man,” “Zombie Boy,” “Red Skull,” and “The Lizardman,” to name a few (L. Mitchell, 2015). Beyond extreme tattoos, body modification includes piercings, scarification, and reconstructive and cosmetic surgery. The reasons for body modification vary, but more than 3,500 people have joined the Church of Body Modification and view their physical changes as a way to spiritually strengthen the connection between body, mind, and soul.

Individuals choose to engage in body modification, but the choice may not be respected by the larger society. In September 2010, 14-year-old high school freshman Ariana Iacono was suspended from school for wearing a small stud in her nose and thus violating the school's dress code, which forbids piercings. The girl and her mother were members of the Church of Body Modification, an organization that only approves new members to join if they can clearly describe their spirituality and how it relates to body modification on the membership application (www.uscobm.com). Iacono claimed that the nose ring was a religious symbol, but school administrators were unsympathetic, arguing that she had not met the criteria for a religious exemption (Netter, 2010).



Deviance in Popular Culture

A wide variety of deviance can be examined by paying careful attention to popular culture. Below are a number of documentary films and television shows that offer concrete examples of specific cultural norms, different types of deviant behavior, and how individuals cope with stigma. What messages about norms and acceptable behavior are portrayed in each of these examples? What is the deviant behavior in each film or episode? What does the reaction to the deviant behavior tell you about the larger culture?

Documentaries

(Trigger Warning: In illustrating deviance, these films contain explicit and disturbing content.)

Audrie & Daisy (2016)—A Netflix documentary about different high school girls who were assaulted by boys in their community; when news and images of the assaults were shared online, the girls were cyberbullied and ended up in such emotional and psychological distress that they each attempted suicide.

*Don't F**k With Cats* (2019)—A disturbing true story of deviance; this three-part Netflix series follows a group of “internet nerds” who launch a manhunt to find the person responsible for killing two kittens in a graphic viral video.

Hot Girls Wanted (2015)—Young women are recruited into the amateur pornography industry. Recruiters look specifically for “girl next door” types, age 18–21, “regular girls getting freaky-deaky.” Even as many of the young women hide their new profession from their parents, those involved argue that porn is and should be going mainstream.

Dark Days (2000)—A documentary featuring people living in the tunnels under the subway system in New York City. Filmed in black-and-white, it shows how one segment of the homeless population built homes and a community under the city.

Deliver Us From Evil (2006)—A documentary investigating sexual abuse within the Catholic Church. The focus is on Father Oliver O’Grady, a pedophile who sexually assaulted dozens of children.

Enron: The Smartest Guys in the Room (2005)—A documentary investigating white-collar crime and the greed that toppled what was once the seventh-largest corporate entity in the United States and left 20,000 employees without jobs.

Food, Inc. (2008)—An investigation into the global food production system, showing that a handful of multinational corporations largely control our food supply, with a clear focus on profit rather than health.

Television

Reality television and the TLC channel, particularly, feature a number of programs offering an inside view of people perceived as deviant or different in some way and showing how these people deal with stigma from various sources. Older shows include *Hoarders*; *Little People, Big World*; and *My Five Wives*. Current shows include the following:

Dr. Pimple Popper—Dr. Sandra Lee, a top dermatologist, works to remove lumps and bumps that patients find unsightly or embarrassing, effectively “changing

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lives one pop at a time.” The show demonstrates stigma and doubt based on personal appearance and shows patients’ relief and gratitude for Dr. Lee’s help in giving them a more “normal” appearance.

The Little Couple—Follows Bill Klein and Jen Arnold. The TLC website proclaims that they’re “just like your average couple—except for the fact that they’re both under 4 feet tall!”

My Giant Life—Follows women who are at least 6 feet, 6 inches tall,

generally a foot taller than the average female, and how their height can make ordinary tasks and relationships challenging.

My 600-lb. Life—Documents extremely overweight individuals as they face surgeries, addictions, and challenges of personal relationships and everyday life.

In paying attention to popular culture and how different subcultures and characteristics are portrayed, we can easily see that deviance is all around us.

Relationships and Deviance

Sexually unconventional behavior is another central topic of discussion when it comes to deviance. As a society, we are generally intrigued by others’ intimate relationships and sexual practices. Goode (2005, p. 230) asks, Why are there so many norms about sexual behavior? And why are the punishments for violating sexual norms so severe? Concerning the first question, Goode rightly claims that the ways we violate mainstream society’s norms by engaging in variant sexual acts are almost infinite. The realm of sexual deviance may include exotic dancers, strippers, sex tourism, anonymous sex in public restrooms, bisexuality, online sexual predators, prostitutes, premarital chastity, and many others. As with virtually every kind of deviance, sexual deviance is largely determined by the community, culture, and context.

Even within the United States, there is considerable disagreement about what sexual activities should and should not be allowed. The issue of same-sex marriage is one example where community values were quite recently tested and defined on political ballots across the country. Another example where context matters is prostitution. While considered a crime in most of the country, prostitution is legal in many areas of Nevada. Certain counties in Nevada are allowed to regulate and license brothels, a multimillion-dollar industry based on legalized prostitution.

While societal norms shape our conceptions of appropriate sexual behavior, those boundaries are regularly tested by new fads and businesses and by many different **subcultures** making up their own rules as they go along. The Ashley Madison Agency, for example, bills itself as the world’s premiere discreet dating service; it is marketed to those who are married and wish to have affairs.

The agency's slogan captures the intent succinctly: "Life is short. Have an affair." The Ashley Madison Agency courts publicity, advertising widely on billboards, in magazines, and on television commercials. Interested adults can go on the website and purchase the "Affair Guarantee" package; if they do not find a suitable partner within three months, they can get a refund. With more than 7 million anonymous members, it is clear that there is widespread interest in relationships outside of marriage. The need for anonymity and discretion also suggests that there is still enough stigma attached to such relationships that it is preferable to shop for a partner before identifying oneself.

This need for privacy was tested when the Ashley Madison Agency was hacked in August 2015, and an estimated 37 million users' information was breached. Some subscribers received extortion letters, demanding payment lest the blackmailers share the information with the individual's family, friends, and social networks (Ridley, 2015). At least one man, a married pastor and seminary professor, killed himself after he was identified as an Ashley Madison client (Segall, 2015). Ashley Madison's parent company expressed condolences for the pastor's death while placing the blame squarely on the hackers, releasing a statement that read: "Dr. Gibson's passing is a stark, heart-wrenching reminder that the criminal hack against our company and our customers has had very real consequences for a great many innocent people" (Segall, 2015). While the lines of exactly which behaviors one might consider deviant may be blurred in this case, it is clear that it ended in tragedy for Dr. Gibson, his family, and his community.

This was not, however, the end of the story for the Ashley Madison Agency. By 2018, Ashley Madison claimed 191,000 daily active users, with more than 1.4 million unique connections made every month (Flynn, 2018). There were more than 5.6 million accounts registered in 2017, and the company's decision to market to women seems to have paid off, as the ratio of male to female active paid users of the site was 1 to 1.13 (Flynn, 2018).

Polygamy is another frequently discredited form of relationship. In the United States, monogamy is the legal norm, yet some religions and subcultures still allow and encourage men to take multiple wives. The conflict between a subculture's values and the larger societal norms came vividly into play in 2008 when the State of Texas conducted a military-style raid on the Yearning for Zion Ranch, a polygamous religious sect of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

Warren S. Jeffs, the leader of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, had been convicted a year earlier on felony charges as an accomplice to rape for his role in coercing the marriage of a 14-year-old girl to her 19-year-old cousin. When the raid on the Yearning for Zion Ranch took place, Jeffs was in the early phases of a 10-year-to-life sentence while awaiting trial on other sex charges in Arizona.

On the basis of an accusation of sexual abuse from an anonymous 16-year-old girl, SWAT teams raided the Yearning for Zion Ranch and forcibly removed more than 400 children from their homes and families. Texas child welfare officials believed that the children were in danger; they suspected young girls were being



Photo 2.2
Community members from the Yearning for Zion Ranch react after the State of Texas forcibly removed more than 400 children from their homes and families.

out of their element in their prairie dresses and old-fashioned hairstyles, forced to move to the suburbs and shop at Walmart rather than tend to their gardens and livestock on the ranch.

In the end, the telephone calls that set the raid in motion may have been a hoax or a setup, but the damage was irreparably done. The children of the Yearning for Zion Ranch were returned to their parents approximately two months later, but the trauma inflicted on the families from such a forced separation could not be taken back. While this was clearly a difficult situation for everyone involved, it presents sociologically interesting questions about what is deviant and who gets to decide this. Those living at the Yearning for Zion Ranch were nearly self-sufficient and seemed to live quietly by their own rules and norms within its bounds. At what point do you think it would be appropriate for the State of Texas to step in and take the children away from their families? Who should ultimately decide? Who are the deviants in this case—the polygamous families or the State of Texas for breaking up those families and traumatizing a whole community? These are interesting and complex questions without easy answers, which is part of what makes deviance such a fascinating—and ever-changing—field of study.

Deviance in Cyberspace: Making Up the Norms as We Go

One way to clearly see that our ideas about deviance and deviant behavior change over time is to consider the creation of whole new categories of deviant behavior. As new technology has developed, brand-new forms of deviance have also taken shape. Cyberdeviance, for example, is a relatively new phenomenon, but it already has many different forms and a potentially huge impact on daily lives: Russia stands accused of tampering with the U.S. presidential election in 2016, phishing scams and hackers threaten to steal consumer information and identities for their own profit, and cyberterrorism is a real threat to businesses and economies around the world.

One dramatic example of violent ideas spreading through social media is the rise of the “Incel Rebellion,” fueled by individuals who define themselves as “involuntarily celibate” (Futrelle, 2018). The “incel” subculture first came to light in 2014 when Elliot Rodger killed six people in what he deemed an act of retribution for all of the women who had rejected him. Others, including Alek Minassian, the suspect in the Toronto van killing in 2018, have followed Rodger’s ideas and built their own subculture promoting hatred and resentment. As Futrelle (2018) describes the incel culture,

Incels direct so much hatred at the outside world—and at women in particular—that it’s easy to lose sight of the many ways incel culture promotes a deep and hopeless form of self-hatred . . . Incels hate women, yes, but they hate themselves nearly as much, and the incel culture not only encourages both kinds of hatred, but it teaches them there is no way out. (para. 8–9)

On perhaps a smaller but still impactful scale for the individuals involved, we might also investigate the online pedophile subculture, cyberbullying, online misbehavior of college students, sexting, and the illegal downloading of music, movies, and readings as examples of cyberdeviance. If such behavior is prevalent, particularly among younger people and hidden populations, should it still be considered deviant? That question is difficult to answer; norms and laws are being created and modified all the time, even as technology improves and offers new possibilities for deviant behavior. Here and throughout the book, we offer select examples of cyberbehavior; you can consider whether you believe such behavior is deviant or not.

Kristi Blevins and Thomas Holt (2009) conducted research into a subculture that crosses the boundaries between cyberdeviance and criminal deviance when they focused on the online subculture of “johns,” or the male heterosexual clients of sex workers. Blevins and Holt explored web forums in a number of U.S. cities in an attempt to identify the norms and values in the mostly hidden world of the client side of sex work. The authors analyzed web forums where heterosexual johns shared questions and information while seeking to minimize exposure to law enforcement. Blevins and Holt particularly focused on the “argot,” or specialized language, of the virtual subculture of johns, and they used extensive quotes to illustrate their points. Three themes related to argot emerged from their analysis. The first theme was “experience,” which, among other things, categorized the johns across a hierarchy from novices or “newbies” to the more experienced “mongers, trollers, or hobbyists” (note that the derogatory term *john* was not used in the argot of the subculture). The second theme was “commodification”—the notion that the prostitutes themselves and the acts the johns wanted were a commodity that came with a cost. This issue raised a great deal of discussion over how much different prostitutes or different sexual acts were worth or likely to cost. Finally, a related theme of “sexuality,” or the various sexual acts desired or experienced, was examined, along with the unique argot for a host of sexual activities. The language

and subject matter are crude but offer a glimpse at the subcultural norms and values of these online communities or subcultures of johns.

Adler and Adler's (2007) study of self-injury, as described above, has also crossed into cyberspace. They explain,

In the past, self-injurers suffered alone and in silence; today, the Internet has enabled the rise of safe subcultural spaces and helped facilitate the transformation of self-injury from a purely psychological phenomenon into something sociological. . . . In the early 2000s, the Internet offered a way for self-injurers to express hidden sides of themselves they could not share with friends or family members. . . . Isolated and stigmatized as suicidal or mentally ill, they sought to find people who might tell them that they weren't alone or crazy. (P. A. Adler & P. Adler, 2012, p. 60)

Adler and Adler (2012) found that the cybercommunities and internet subcultures varied in their approach to self-injury, with some focused strictly on recovery and holding firm to "no trigger" policies and formal rules for participation, whereas other groups embraced and seemed to glorify self-injury. By the mid-2000s, most sites strove to mediate interaction without stifling communication. As Adler and Adler (2012) suggest,

The cyber-world represents a new form of space that is both "out there" and "in here"—simultaneously public and social, while remaining private and solitary. . . . These spaces are fertile locations for the rise of virtual communities that challenge traditional notions of identity and community, and, as some suggest, radically alter our conceptions of community and the nature of our communities. (p. 61)

Subcultural Deviance

The virtual subculture of johns is just one example of many subcultures that might be considered deviant by at least some segment of the population. While the johns are generally a hidden population, some subcultures are easily identifiable and can be singled out for holding different norms and values than the larger society, as you can see from the earlier example of the Yearning for Zion Ranch. That case is particularly dramatic as children were taken from their parents and homes, but many other subcultures also draw strong reactions from the outside community.

Research on subcultures has been wide ranging. Hamm (2004) studied terrorist subcultures, examining the "complex ways in which music, literature, symbolism and style are used to construct terrorism" (p. 328). Others have written about "fat admirers," men who have a strong, erotic desire for obese women (Goode, 2008b); radical environmentalist organizations (Scarce, 2008); and the subculture of UFO contactees and abductees (Bader, 2008).

The Amish are another example of a subculture, but the question of deviance becomes quite complicated, particularly during the time when Amish youth are encouraged to go outside of the community and explore the “English” way of life. In this case, some types of deviant behavior are sanctioned for a short time before the teenagers choose their adult path and decide whether to be baptized and become an Amish adult in good standing or basically be ostracized from their parents and communities.

Reiling (2002) conducted a study on Amish youths’ response to culturally prescribed deviance that presents a number of complex questions. Old Order Amish believe in nonassimilation with the dominant culture, in-group conformity, and a very disciplined lifestyle. Yet Amish teenagers are expected to engage in deviant behavior in the rite of passage known as the “simmie” period, similar to Rumspringa, when they explore the “English” lifestyle before choosing to either commit to their Amish culture or leave it forever. Reiling found that youth generally stayed in this decision-making period for two to three years, with 20% to 25% of youth in the settlement choosing to defect from the Amish, at which point they are excommunicated, cut off from their families, and ostracized. Even though Old Order Amish youth are encouraged to dabble in deviance, they are generally not able to do so openly. They must live between rules, and the question of what is deviant—and to whom—takes on a whole new meaning during this time frame and in this context. Reiling reports that

virtually every participant reported that they experienced social isolation during this time, which generated a high level of depression and anxiety. Amish youth are caught in a double bind because even though they are culturally mandated to explore their identity, they are granted very little room to do so openly. First, it is believed to be necessary to emotionally distance themselves from their parents to fully explore English identity. Second, the youth are forced to quit school when they turn 16. These conditions create the ironic consequence of Amish youth’s becoming socially isolated from English youth and emotionally isolated from their Amish parents at a time when they are deliberating which of those two identities they will adopt. (pp. 155–156)

Elite Deviance, Corporate Deviance, and Workplace Misconduct

Elite deviance is an important topic but one that does not generally receive as much attention as the potentially more dramatic violent acts and property crimes (“street” crimes) that affect individuals on a personal level. While individuals tend to actively fear being victimized by street crimes, they probably do not realize the enormous impact elite deviance may have on their everyday lives. Mantsios

(2010) offers a strong statement and indictment on how the corporate elite gain and maintain their status:

Corporate America is a world made up of ruthless bosses, massive layoffs, favoritism and nepotism, health and safety violations, pension plan losses, union busting, tax evasions, unfair competition, and price gouging, as well as fast buck deals, financial speculation, and corporate wheeling and dealing that serve the interests of the corporate elite, but are generally wasteful and destructive to workers and the economy in general.

It is no wonder Americans cannot think straight about class. The mass media is neither objective, balanced, independent, nor neutral. Those who own and direct the mass media are themselves part of the upper class. (pp. 240–241)

Elite deviance has been defined as “criminal and deviant acts by the largest corporations and the most powerful political organizations” (D. R. Simon, 2008, p. xi). In the introduction to his book on the topic, David R. Simon (2008) explains that elite deviance refers to acts by elites or organizations that result in harm. He distinguishes between three different types of harm: physical harms, including death or physical injury; financial harms, including robbery, fraud, and various scams; and moral harms, which are harder to define but encourage distrust and alienation among members of the lower and middle classes (p. 35). Simon further breaks the topic of elite deviance down into three types of acts: economic domination, government and governmental control, and denial of basic human rights.

Bandura, Caprara, and Zsolnai (2000) explored corporate transgressions—the exercise and abuse of power closely linked to the legitimate conduct of business—through moral disengagement. Their study offers an interesting analysis of how corporations may adopt institutional practices that violate laws and harm the public. The authors briefly highlight four famous cases: an industrial disaster in Bhopal, India; the Ford Pintos that burst into flame on impact; Nestlé’s selling of infant formula to developing countries—a practice that led to the malnutrition of babies in Third World countries; and the Three Mile Island case, the most severe accident in U.S. commercial nuclear power plant history. Unlike most elite deviance, these cases garnered widespread public attention and brought notice—at least temporarily—to harmful corporate practices. Bandura and colleagues identified a number of disengagement mechanisms that led to these tragic cases, including moral justification, euphemistic labeling, displacement of responsibility, diffusion of responsibility, disregarding consequences, dehumanization of those affected, and attribution of blame to others or circumstances outside of themselves. Bandura et al. concluded that

what is informative in these cases is that the moral collusion can end in justifying actions whose outcomes continue to be disapproved.

The belief system of the corporation may remain unaffected for a long time by practices that are detrimental to it as well as to the general public. Selective disengagement mechanisms are deployed to mask such a contradiction and to perpetuate harmful corporate practices. (p. 63)

We have included the study by Bandura et al. as one of the readings with this chapter so that you can read more about these cases and the authors' conclusions.

A much more common and smaller-scale form of deviance is workplace deviance. Employee misconduct undoubtedly leads to business failures and higher consumer costs; studies estimate that as many as two-thirds of workers are involved in employee theft or other forms of employee deviance. Table 2.2 documents the percentage of employees taking part in the “invisible social problem” of workplace misconduct (Huiras, Uggen, & McMorris, 2000).

Positive Deviance

Even within sociology, there is some debate as to whether such a thing as **positive deviance** exists. Goode (1991), for example, believes that positive deviance is a contradiction in terms, or an oxymoron. Jones (1998) and others disagree. We encourage you to try the exercise on random acts of kindness in the “Now You . . .” box at the end of the chapter and compare your results with those of your classmates. In conducting your own small research project, you are addressing a research question (does positive deviance exist?), collecting data (observing your own feelings and the

Table 2.2 Employee Deviance in the Previous Year

Behavior	Percentage Reporting Act
Got to work late without a good reason	51.0
Called in sick when not sick	47.9
Gave away goods or services	32.7
Claimed to have worked more hours than really did	9.7
Took things from employer or coworker	9.1
Been drunk or high at work	7.2
Lied to get or keep job	5.8
Misused or took money	2.5
Purposely damaged property	2.1

Source: Huiras, Uggen, and McMorris (2000).

reactions of others), and drawing conclusions. As a social scientist, what are your thoughts on positive deviance? Which side do you land on in the debate?

While the exercise on random acts of kindness gives you a chance to think about positive deviance on an individual level, scholars have recently been studying the idea of positive deviance at the organizational or corporate level. Spreitzer and Sonenshein (2004) define positive deviance as “intentional behaviors that significantly depart from the norms of a referent group in honorable ways” (p. 841). The following example from Spreitzer and Sonenshein’s article helps to clarify the concept:

In 1978, Merck & Co., one of the world’s largest pharmaceutical companies, inadvertently discovered a potential cure for river blindness, a disease that inflicts tremendous pain, disfigurement, and blindness on its victims. The medication was first discovered as a veterinarian antibiotic, but it quickly created a major dilemma for Merck when its scientists realized the medication could be adapted to become a cure for river blindness. Because river blindness was indigenous to the developing world, Merck knew that it would never recover its research or distribution expenses for the drug. In addition, the company risked bad publicity for any unexpected side effects of the drug that in turn could damage the drug’s reputation as a veterinary antibiotic (Business Enterprise Trust, 1991). Departing from norms in the pharmaceutical industry, Merck decided to manufacture and distribute the drug for free to the developing world, costing the company millions of dollars. Consequently, Merck helped eradicate river blindness, at its own expense. (pp. 834–835)

Spreitzer and Sonenshein (2004) argue that Merck’s action in this case is an excellent example of positive deviance. The organization faced great cost and risk to develop, manufacture, and distribute the drug, yet Merck chose to depart from corporate norms prioritizing profit and gains and, in doing so, prevented further suffering from river blindness.

Sometimes the line between positive deviance and crime is extremely hard to define. Edward Snowden, for example, is an individual who went against all corporate and government norms to expose thousands of top-secret government documents. His leaking of these documents was viewed by a former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) deputy director as “the most serious compromise of classified information in the history of the U.S. intelligence community” (Michael Morell, cited in Reitman, 2013, para. 7). Snowden was a reportedly brilliant high school dropout who began working as a computer technician with the CIA and became increasingly disturbed by “a continuing litany of lies from senior officials to Congress—and therefore the American people” (quoted in Reitman, 2013, para. 59). Snowden eventually downloaded more than 50,000 documents

and intelligence reports; he chose to become a whistleblower and outlaw when he leaked those documents to the press. Just two days after the first stories were printed, President Barack Obama admitted that the National Security Agency (NSA) was collecting enormous amounts of intelligence on ordinary citizens; two weeks later, the Obama administration brought criminal charges against Snowden under the Espionage Act, and a number of U.S. officials labeled Snowden a traitor (Reitman, 2013). Snowden was granted temporary asylum in Russia, where he went into hiding. While demonized by the U.S. government, others consider Snowden a hero who risked his life to get the public vital information. History will ultimately be the judge of whether Snowden is remembered as an individual bravely practicing positive deviance for the greater good or a traitor committing crimes against his country.

The idea of positive deviance is growing at the individual, organizational, and community levels, and new research continues to stretch the concept and add to our understanding of how this “oxymoron” may play out in everyday life. Tufts University even hosts its own Positive Deviance Initiative. The initiative takes the following as its starting point:

Positive Deviance is based on the observation that in every community there are certain individuals or groups whose uncommon behaviors and strategies enable them to find better solutions to problems than their peers, while having access to the same resources and facing similar or worse challenges. (www.positivedeviance.org)



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Photo 2.3
Would you consider Edward Snowden's actions a form of positive deviance? Why or why not?

Global Perspectives on Types of Deviance

When we think about deviance and social control, what often comes to mind is the reaction to an act—it might be a criminal act, a social faux pas, or the violation of a society's unwritten rules that trigger a reaction from the community. As you will see when learning about labeling theory (Chapter 8), however, sometimes people are punished, oppressed, and sanctioned purely because of who they are. The following examples take two master statuses—that of being a woman and that of identifying as gay or as a gay rights activist—and show how simply existing within those statuses can lead to deadly consequences in some parts of the world.



Photo 2.4
Malala Yousafzai was targeted by the Taliban and won a Nobel Peace Prize as a teenager for her courage in advocating for education for girls in Pakistan.

Social Control of Girls and Women

The book *Half the Sky*, written by husband and wife journalist team Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn (2009), vividly documents the oppression and control of women and girls across the globe. The authors focus their book on three particular kinds of abuse: “sex trafficking and forced prostitution; gender-based violence, including honor killings and mass rape; and maternal mortality, which still needlessly claims one woman a minute” (p. xxi).

Kristof and WuDunn (2009) tell stories of young girls in Cambodia, Nepal, Thailand, and Malaysia who were kidnapped, raped, and sold into brothels where they were regularly drugged, beaten, and forced to live as prostitutes and/or modern-day slaves. Girls who were brave enough and risked their lives to escape found no help from local police, who sent them back to the brothels (p. 7).

The authors go on to report on many different kinds of punishments and threats that women endure in other nations.

Women perceived to be “loose” or “bad” in Pakistan had their faces destroyed by acid or had their noses cut off as a form of punishment (Kristof & WuDunn, 2009, p. 75). Girls in Iraq were killed by family and religious leaders if it was believed they lost their virginity before marriage (Kristof & WuDunn, 2009, p. 82). In Darfur, militia members gang-raped and mutilated women from African tribes, and the Sudanese government responded by punishing women who reported the rapes or sought medical attention (p. 83). In the Congo, rape was used as a terror tactic to control civilian populations; Congolese militia members raped women with sticks or knives and were known to fire their guns into women’s and girls’ vaginas (p. 84). A teenage soldier in the Congo explained that rape was routine, saying if he and his fellow soldiers saw girls, it was their right to rape and violate them (p. 86).

As terrifying as it may be, some girls living in restrictive and punitive cultures take great risks to fight for better lives. Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani schoolgirl, received widespread attention—both positive and negative—when she began speaking out against Taliban oppression when she was only 11 years old. She began her individual form of resistance by writing her thoughts and experiences in a blog, using a pseudonym to protect her identity; gradually, she became a more public figure and made media appearances advocating for education for girls. When she was just 14 years old, Malala was targeted and shot in the head and neck by a Taliban gunman while on the school bus home. In part because of her public persona and status as a martyr, she was fortunate enough to get specialized medical care and recover from her wounds.

In October 2014, Malala was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize; at 17 years old, she was the youngest person to ever receive the prize. She had won the European Union’s highest human rights honor, the Sakharov Prize, the year before at the age

of 16. Her bravery has been lauded by the international press, and she has inspired other young girls to fight against oppression and for education and opportunities. “I Am Malala” became the slogan for a campaign to demand global access to education for children. Malala herself continues to face threats from the Taliban; the goals she risks her life for may seem quite simple to those who grew up in the United States and accept such circumstances as their birthright. In Malala’s words, “I hope that a day will come when the people of Pakistan will be free, they will have their rights, there will be peace, and every girl and every boy will be going to school” (quoted in Williams, 2013, para. 16).

Social Control of Homosexuality

Although the United States continues grappling with evolving norms and attitudes around the issues of homophobia, the bullying of gay teens, and hate crimes against gay individuals, simply being gay is not a crime, and threats and cruelty are not formally sanctioned. The same cannot be said in other countries. Homosexuality is illegal in most African countries, and homosexual acts are punishable in Uganda by 14 years to life in prison (T. Walsh, 2011). The Anti-Homosexuality Bill proposed in Uganda in 2009 included harsh sanctions for anyone engaging in gay sex or protecting the privacy of those who do. The bill featured the following provisions:

Gays and lesbians convicted of having gay sex would be sentenced, at minimum, to life in prison.

People who test positive for HIV may be executed.

Homosexuals who have sex with a minor, or engage in homosexual sex more than once, may also receive the death penalty.

The bill forbids the “promotion of homosexuality,” which in effect bans organizations working in HIV and AIDS prevention.

Anyone who knew of homosexual activity taking place but did not report it would risk up to three years in prison. (Ahmed, 2009, para. 5–9)

The Anti-Homosexuality Bill prompted an international reaction; European nations threatened to cut aid to Uganda if such laws were passed, and the bill was shelved. While the bill was not passed into law, harsh and deadly informal sanctions are still a real threat to gays and gay rights activists in Uganda. A Ugandan tabloid published a front-page story targeting the “top 100 homosexuals,” complete with photographs and addresses of those on the list. David Kato, a gay rights activist, told reporters that he feared for his life after his name was published on the list; he was right to be afraid—within the year, Kato was bludgeoned to death in his home (T. Walsh, 2011).

Deviance and Disparity: Differential Treatment in Dealing With Addiction, Prostitution, and Graffiti

When deciding whether an act or a characteristic is deviant, the social class and status of the actor(s) can make all the difference. Already in this book, we have covered examples of elite deviance and what is colloquially referred to as “street” crime and deviance. Above, we considered corporate deviance versus workplace misconduct. A few other examples of street versus elite deviance—and the very different reactions they may receive—follow.

Drug Use and Addiction

Amy Winehouse famously sang about how “they tried to make me go to rehab,” but she was one celebrity who declined treatment (saying “no, no, no”), and she tragically died at age 27, cutting short a very promising musical career. Celebrities are often in the news for choosing to go to rehab, checking themselves into treatment facilities for a variety of ailments, including addictions to prescription pills, alcohol, and cocaine. It may be reported that stars have checked into hospitals or treatment centers for personal and health reasons, with the details left to the imagination. The act of celebrities checking themselves into treatment has lost much of its stigma. While some stars, such as Lindsay Lohan, are sent to inpatient rehabilitation as part of a court order, celebrities who voluntarily choose inpatient treatment are often applauded for attempting to take control of their lives and work through their particular issues. They are fortunate that they have the resources to go to expensive facilities where their privacy and care is closely guarded.

Poor and working-class addicts face a much different reality. Many local rehab centers work with community drug courts and jail and prison diversion programs, receiving clients who are sent to them through force rather than choice. A recent study focusing on rehab facilities with strong ties to drug courts, probation, and parole calls such institutions “strong-arm rehab” and identifies “a particular type of court-mandated rehabilitation emphasizing long residential stays, high structure, mutual surveillance, and an intense process of character reform. Strong-arm rehab also tends to be a highly racialized form, consistently linked to poor African American drug offenders” (Gowan & Whetstone, 2012, p. 70). There is nothing glamorous about these facilities; if the clients do not follow the treatment program, their lack of cooperation can lead to criminal sanctions. The treatment received by these addicts is very different from the treatment and response afforded to their celebrity counterparts.

Along with unequal treatment based on celebrity status and social class, scholars argue that much drug policy in the United States has racist origins. When race and class interact, it can become even more complicated. Tiger (2017) argues that America’s opiate epidemic demonstrates classism in the clear differences in how

White and middle-class users are treated as opposed to those in the lower class: “poor White drug users are caught at the intersection of the criminal justice, drug treatment, and child protection systems (p. 48).” In her research, Tiger found that doctors and lawyers favored monitoring and coerced treatment for their White working-class and poor patients dealing with opiate addiction; she argues that the experience of the poor White drug users she studied in rural Vermont were dealing with the same punitive disciplining that low-income African American and Latino methadone patients receive in big cities.

Prostitution

Media images of prostitution range from the hardened streetwalker working the corner to the expensive and exclusive call girl working to satisfy her wealthy clients. While legal in some states, prostitution is generally a criminal act that draws both workers and clients from across the entire spectrum of social classes and cultures. The demand is high, and prostitutes and johns—or call girls and their clients, as the more upscale agencies may refer to them—can meet in many different ways, including through the use of a wide array of websites. One such website, SeekingArrangement.com, claims to have over 10 million members in 139 different countries; individuals find prospective partners on the site and are then able to define their own terms for mutually beneficial relationships between “sugar babies” and “sugar daddies and mommas.” SeekingArrangement recently advertised a “college tuition sugar daddy,” enticing heavily indebted college students to consider setting up profiles as sugar babies to arrange for them to have sex with older men to pay their bills. The founder of SeekingArrangement estimates that 35% of his 800,000 members are students. The nearly 180,000 college sugar babies attend universities that include New York University, Harvard, UCLA, and the University of Southern California (Fairbanks, 2012). Even as they trade sex for money, the college women looking for sugar daddies and using these websites generally resist the label and do not consider themselves prostitutes. They often lead two lives—keeping secret their identities as sugar babies for fear of being labeled and stigmatized as they continue their college educations and conforming careers. One young woman involved in a sugar daddy relationship explained her thoughts on her boundaries and her framing of her own identity:

I’m not a whore. Whores are paid by the hour, can have a high volume of clients in a given day, and it’s based on money, not on who the individual actually is. There’s no feeling involved and the entire interaction revolves around a sexual act. . . . I don’t engage with a high volume of people, instead choosing one or two men I actually like spending time with and have decided to develop a friendship with them. And while sex is involved, the focus is on providing friendship. It’s not only about getting paid. (Fairbanks, 2012, “I’m Not a Whore,” para. 7)

Scull (2020) conducted 48 in-depth interviews with women in the United States who had been in sugar relationships and she identified seven types of sugar relationships, “only one of which can be considered prostitution” (p. 135). Scull categorizes the different relationships as sugar prostitution, compensated dating, compensated companionship, sugar dating, sugar friendships, sugar friendships with benefits, and pragmatic love. While 40% of the women that Scull interviewed never had sex with a benefactor, in all cases, the women accepted money or gifts in exchange for their time and companionship. Scull (2020) argues, however, that the majority of sugar relationships differ from prostitution because they are not direct “pay-for-play” relationships and the sugaring script calls for the participants to have authentic emotions for their benefactors (p. 152).



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Photo 2.5
Why is graffiti sometimes considered art and sometimes considered vandalism? Which would you consider this piece by Banksy to be? Why?

Graffiti

Why is defacing public property sometimes considered vandalism and sometimes considered art? Some graffiti writers set out to offend people in the community, viewing their practice as a key aspect of a rebel lifestyle and describing graffiti “as the space that allowed them to be the assholes they wanted to be” (Monto, Machalek, & Anderson, 2013, p. 273). Illegal graffiti can be viewed as a subcultural activity, offering risk and thrills to the graffiti writers. These writers often lead double lives, hiding their conventional identities behind their chosen graffiti tags (Campos, 2012). “Graffiti elders” such as Andrew “Zephyr” Witten continue wielding the spray-paint can into middle age, balancing parenthood and conforming careers with the illicit thrills of “train-bombing,” or illegally painting trains or other people’s property (Ghosh, 2012). Yet some murals by graffiti writers have been heralded as public art, and British artist Banksy—described in *Smithsonian* magazine as “graffiti master, painter, activist, filmmaker and all-purpose provocateur”—was named to *Time* magazine’s list of the world’s most influential people in 2010. The *Smithsonian* article describes Banksy’s remarkable success as an “upward trajectory from the outlaw spraying—or, as the argot has it, ‘bombing’—walls in Bristol, England, during the 1990s to the artist whose work commands hundreds of thousands of dollars in the auction houses of Britain and America” (Ellsworth-Jones, 2013, para. 1). Even as his fame and fortune has grown, Banksy has worked hard to remain anonymous, continuing to create memorable street art both in public spaces and in formal art exhibits around the world. When should we consider graffiti a criminal act and a public

nuisance, and when should we think of it as art? Is Banksy deserving of his success? Will any of today's young graffiti writers have the same kind of artistic success? At what point does the transition from vandal to celebrated artist occur?

Ideas in Action: Guerrilla Gardening in Low-Income Areas

Ron Finley has gained fame for his crusade to plant edible gardens in urban areas, allowing those living in low-income communities access to fresh vegetables and produce. He cofounded LA Green Grounds, a nonprofit volunteer group that helps people to set up edible community gardens, teaching them to grow and maintain their own organic fruits, vegetables, and herbs in their neighborhood (Gunther, 2011).

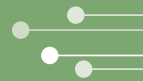
Finley's work began when he planted a community garden in the narrow strip of land between the sidewalk and the curb in front of his house in California's Crenshaw District. As his organic tomatoes, onions, peppers, and eggplants grew, he garnered attention from both neighbors and the city. The strip of land in front of his house is known as a "parkway"; parkways are managed by the city, and Finley's garden was in violation of city regulations. Finley chose to challenge the rules, and he mobilized the community and the media to support his cause. Los Angeles officials backed off and opened the door to the growth of urban farming.

Finley gave a dynamic, challenging, and inspiring TED Talk in 2013 that quickly gained more than 1.5 million views. In it, he paints a vivid picture of living in a "food desert," an area where there are plenty of liquor stores, fast-food restaurants, and vacant lots but little access to healthy foods. He claims that Los Angeles owns 26 square miles of vacant lots, which he suggests is enough space to plant 700 million tomato plants. "It's like my gospel: I'm telling people, grow your own food. Growing your own food is like printing your own money" (Finley, 2013).

Finley calls on audience members to become "ecolutionaries, renegades, gangsters, gangster gardeners," to pick up shovels. Finley sees gardens as a tool for transformation. He asserts that gardening is "the most therapeutic and defiant act you can do—especially in the inner cities." He believes young people want to work and that kids can be taken off the streets and trained to "take over their communities and have a sustainable life." He wants to "flip the script on what a gangster is . . . if you ain't a gardener, you ain't gangster. Get gangster with your shovel and let that be your weapon of choice" (Finley, 2013).

A 2013 *New York Times* story allowed Finley to share his vision for the future. He said, "I want to plant entire blocks of vegetable beds. . . . I want to turn shipping containers into healthy cafes where customers can pick their salad and juice off the trees. I want our inner-city churches to become ministries of health instead of places that serve up fried, fattening foods. I want to clean up my yard, my street and my 'hood" (Hochman, 2013, para. 27).

Now You . . . Try an Experiment in Positive Deviance!



One way to explore the idea of positive deviance is to conduct your own small-scale experiment and then decide whether you think positive deviance exists. For this exercise, your task is to go out and commit random acts of kindness—arguably a form of positive deviance.

Many introductory sociology classes ask students to conduct a breaching experiment by breaking a norm and then observing the reactions of those around them. In this case, the goal is to perform a face-to-face act of kindness for a *stranger* and to take note of the reaction to your behavior.

Think about the following questions in completing your act(s) of kindness (you may find it helpful, necessary, or interesting to repeat the act more than once):

1. Why did you choose to do this particular act of kindness?
2. How did you feel while doing the random act of kindness, and why do you think you felt this way?

3. How did the recipient—and any others who witnessed the kindness—react? Speculate as to why they reacted the way they did. If the situation was reversed, do you think you would have reacted differently?

Be safe and smart in your choice of kindnesses, be careful not to inflict trauma on yourself or the recipient, and be certain that you do not put yourself in a dangerous position. After conducting your experiment, reflect on how you felt and what the reactions to your act of kindness were. Did you take age or gender into consideration in choosing your “target”? Did you feel the need to explain that your act was an experiment or assignment for class? Based on this data, do you think positive deviance exists? Why or why not?

Source: Adapted from Jones (1998).

Finley and his LA Green Grounds organization are another example of positive deviance—they are acting altruistically and outside of the norms. They have challenged city regulations about the use of parkways and vacant lots, and they are literally transforming low-income areas of Los Angeles from the ground up, providing healthy activities and organic food for community members.

Question: So Who Are the Deviants? Answer: It Depends on Whom You Ask

We cannot emphasize enough how much context matters in any discussion or explanation of deviant behavior. You simply can't discuss forms of deviance

without some reference to culture, context, and historical period. What some people regard as deviant, others regard as virtuous. What some might praise, others condemn. To say that deviance exists does not specify which acts are considered deviant by which groups, in what situations, and at any given time.

Conclusion

We hope that after reading this chapter—and delving further into this book—your ideas about deviant behavior and social control will have greatly expanded. The more commonly studied types of deviant behavior, such as criminal deviance (including street crime) and elite deviance (including corporate and white-collar crimes), are explored further throughout the book. Our goal in this chapter is simply to help broaden your understanding of what constitutes deviance and to realize the question “What is deviance?” must be followed by the qualifier “According to whom?” We realize that this chapter and this book will not resolve these issues for you and may very well raise more questions than answers. Still, our goal is to broaden your understanding of deviance and its many forms.

With that goal in mind, we provide a few extra exercises and discussion questions in this chapter to help you explore boundaries, conduct your own experiments, form your own analyses, and begin to think about deviance and social control very broadly. Chapter 3 delves much more specifically into the art and science of researching deviance. You’ll soon see that deviance is a very interesting topic to study and research. For now, we hope you will take a close look at the norms and behavior of your community and the larger society. We think you will soon discover an enormous amount of diversity in the deviance that is all around you.

EXERCISES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Look again at Table 2.1, compiled by Simmons in 1965. Give several friends or family members the same instruction that Simmons used, “List those things or types of persons whom you regard as deviant,” and compile the responses. Do any of the categories from your small study overlap with those that Simmons found? Do any of the categories from 1965 disappear entirely? How would you explain this? Do you notice any generational differences in how we think about deviance?
2. Pay attention over the next 24 hours, and see what kinds of deviant behavior you notice. It can be behavior you witness, you commit (hopefully nothing that will get you in trouble!), or you hear about on the news

or media. What did you notice? How many different types of deviance were you exposed to in one day?

3. To explore the idea of stigma and how a physical trait can deeply affect an individual's life, you might try imagining a day with a disability. This exercise will begin with a diary entry: Record a typical day (what you did, the interactions you had, etc.), and then assign yourself a visible attribute typically associated with deviance (e.g., being blind, being obese, or missing a limb). Rewrite your diary entry to reflect what you imagine would be different that day given your stigma. What obstacles would you face? Would people treat you differently? What did you learn about deviance, social norms, stigma, and coping by completing this exercise?
4. In a recent example of a polygamous lifestyle, the reality television show *Sister Wives* portrays a polygamist family; it begins at the point where the husband is courting his fourth wife, and the series follows the family for several seasons. His motto is "Love should be multiplied, not divided." Do you think this kind of polygamy—where the relationships are consensual and the brides are all adults—is deviant? Why or why not?

KEY TERMS

Body modification 42
Elite deviance 49
Physical deviance 38

Polygamy 45
Positive deviance 51
Self-injury 41

Sexual deviance 38
Stigma 40
Subcultures 44

READINGS

Reading 2.1

In this reading, Lundquist and Curington (2019) examine the practice and emerging norms and culture of online dating of college students. They suggest that there is little stigma attached to online dating apps and, instead, many college students prefer them to the "hookup culture" on campuses. In place of the relative anonymity and alcohol-infused hookup culture, dating apps allow users more ability to negotiate consent, safety, and boundaries before deciding to meet their matches. This is one example of emerging technologies and social change and how new platforms and practices can come to be defined as either deviant or the new norm. Lundquist and Curington (2019) conclude that "students today are proactively using online dating technology to generate new rules of intimacy" (p. 27). Norms are continuously challenged and are constantly evolving—even on Tinder.

Love Me Tinder, Love Me Sweet: Reshaping the College Hookup Culture

Jennifer Hickes Lundquist and Celeste Vaughan Curington

Are “hookup” apps leading, ironically, to a revival of dating culture on college campuses? While doing research for our forthcoming book with Ken-Hou Lin on online dating, *Romantic Apartheid: The Enduring Racial Divide in the Era of Online Dating*, we find that dating apps are providing a way to bypass the romantic gate keeping that campus party culture has long dominated. Many students are now leveraging these apps to circumvent the worst of the college hookup scene. Yet, online platforms also introduce new challenges.

Women and racial and ethnic minorities, in particular, resent how the disinhibitory effect of cyber-communications can expose them to a wide range of racialized and sexist online interactions. However, dating apps give these students greater control over partner choice empowering them to set the context of a first meeting, which is a unique advantage of online dating that tempers the negatives for many of those we interviewed. Despite their drawbacks, these new technologies have the potential to make college intimacy not only safer but also more fulfilling for a larger cross-section of students than traditional hookup culture.

The U.S. College Hookup Scene: A Background

Many studies have documented the post-1970s rise of hookup culture on college campuses, which have become the dominant context through which the average student initiates intimacy. While researchers note some positive aspects of hookup culture (e.g., sexual exploration and empowerment), they are counterbalanced by a number of other problematic tendencies, such as misogyny, risky sexual behaviors,

and an alienating social hierarchy. As a reflection of larger cultural influences, it is perhaps not surprising that hookup culture is both heteronormative and male-centered. However, the drunken conditions under which many hookups occur, at best, highlight the privilege of men’s pleasure over women’s pleasure and, at worst, facilitate sexual assault and rape. A minority of students report unambiguous enjoyment of hookup culture, while most others are ambivalent, made uneasy by its celebration of selfish and transactional behavior toward others. Among some of the others, it is correlated with depression and lowered self-esteem.

Despite these findings, there is a popular allure to hookup culture, and it is widely accepted as part of the U.S. college experience. While studies show that many college students participate in this culture, there is significant social exclusion. A large minority of American students opt out, either because they find it distasteful or feel excluded from conventional standards of “coolness” or attractiveness. Studies show that there are important social class, race, and sexual identity dimensions to who decides to opt out. In our interviews with undergraduate students, we find that online dating apps not only provide minority groups an alternative social pathway, but also that most women see dating apps as more liberating and appealing than the hookup scene.

Getting “Hooked” on Online Dating

Online dating originated with the advent of internet access in the mid-to-late nineties, but the widespread adoption of smartphones has made GPS-sourcing dating apps a daily fixture for many. One man we interviewed remarked, “It becomes part of a rotation.



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The shit you check on your phone.” Describing his frequent app checks, he said: “I’ll check the *New York Times*, see what Trump did, I’ll check the Patriot’s score, check my dating app . . .”. Dating companies did not initially consider college students a worthwhile marketing demographic, assuming they already have ample access to same-age singles in their day-to-day college social lives. In fact, the main goal of online dating sites and apps has been to *recreate* the college dating market for twenty and thirty-somethings, most of whom no longer have access to a pool of potential dates in their post-college work orbits. In a recent industry survey conducted by ABODO, entitled *Swipe Right For Love?* many were taken by surprise to learn that 70% of college students report using online dating platforms. We, too, find that dating apps are ubiquitous on college campuses. One lesbian-identified student we interviewed spoke to the pervasiveness of dating apps: “On the bus in the morning, there are people just Tinder-ing, swiping. It’s crazy . . . People say whenever they need a poop break, they just go on Tinder.” A white man estimated the prevalence as, “Oh, I’d say it’s 100%.”

How do students first start using these platforms? We find that students of all backgrounds

approach these platforms as an easy and self-proclaimed “lazy” way to test the dating waters upon entering a new university setting. For some, dating apps lead to humorous group bonding activity as students engage in “group swiping” or “tinder-ing” with friends. Friends often “app play” on one another’s accounts, poking fun at profile details, co-creating profiles, and laughing over messages exchanged. Even when apart, students described taking screenshots of dating app profiles or their online interactions and sending them to friends. Although we generally think of online dating as being quite private, the performative aspects of one’s profile display and the selection processes that go into swiping are often quite public within one’s social networks on college campuses.

Moreover, even in a very large university setting, the likelihood that one will see someone from an app on campus or have a friend of a friend in common is much more common than in the urban, non-college user settings where we also conducted interviews. One Asian American student purposely ignores the profiles belonging to classmates when she “tinders” in order to avoid an awkward interaction with someone in class who may not have reciprocated interest

on the dating platform. Conversely, many students told us that they rely on online dating profiles to make large universities seem smaller and to determine who in their classes is available or, in the case of gay students, who is “out.”

Our student interviewees say they use dating apps because they either consider themselves “too shy” for the party scene or because they dislike the drug and alcohol dynamics at play there. A number of students described lower anxiety in online dating because rejection is both more indirect (e.g., non-response) and takes place outside the purview of others. A man told us, “At least for me it’s been a big thing for my self-esteem and confidence. I feel like if it weren’t for Tinder, I would feel a lot less comfortable meeting people just in person.”

Indeed, there is something about getting matched on a dating app, where both people must swipe right on one another to indicate mutual attraction, that holds powerful sway in the backdrop of the indifferent hookup culture. In the average hookup, mutual attraction is not necessarily articulated and norms dictate that participants should show less interest in one another afterward than they might show a distant acquaintance. One student described fraternity parties on her campus where hookups are common: “The hookup culture is a big thing and it sucks. No one cares, and there is no commitment. You’re just kind of giving up your worth for nothing because you feel like you have to.” By contrast, online dating apps take on an almost quaint earnestness. One must put the time into assembling a profile and, in so doing, signals an interest in making a romantic connection. After a successful match, the couple then moves on to a series of online interactions before an eventual face-to-face meeting. Given this multi-stage process, it is harder to claim that one’s interest was a drunken mistake or the result of “beer-gogglng” as is so often the case in hookups. Students told us they found this basic premise a refreshing contrast to the uncertainty and alienation of the hookup. One student prefers meeting men on the app as opposed to the usual “going to a party, drinking, and making out with some kid who

wouldn’t talk to you the next day in class.” Another student found it difficult to go back to the random hookup culture after using dating apps, noting that at parties, “there’s also more chance that you can have absolutely nothing in common. They’d be the kind of person I swipe no to and I didn’t read their bio so I wouldn’t know.” Unlike older online daters we interviewed, who say that some friends and family see it as a venue for the desperate, students see little stigma in online dating. Given the pervasive cool aspect of the hookup, the lack of perceived stigma stands in marked contrast.

Expressing One’s Sexual Desires and Boundaries

While the hookup commonly takes place under the influence of alcohol, first “tinder dates” usually take place sober, often at a public space such as a café. Moreover, initial meetings are preceded by a week or two of what we call “cyber courting.” This is when potential partners move off the dating platform to texting, Snapchatting, or some other social media, allowing couples to get to know each other and occasionally facilitating cyber-sexual interactions prior to their first face-to-face meeting. While hookups are hallmarked by the unaccountability of drunken spontaneity later followed by posed detachment, dating apps establish a mutually clear romantic motive from the beginning. This motive then unfolds into a normative sequence providing both structure and exit opportunities at various levels as the interaction intensifies. This iterative communication process stands apart from college hookup culture, which tends to silence open dialogue around affirmative sexual consent, much less discussion of sexual tastes and boundaries.

Comparing her party hookups to her interactions using her dating app, one student summed it up like this: “. . . going out and hooking up with someone drunk is just not going anywhere, not benefiting anyone. But I feel like if you’re just starting sober and you’re meeting someone because you already know you’re attracted to each other and

you also have something in common, 'cause you decide to meet them, it's already going in a better direction." This is not to claim that dating apps are never used under the influence of alcohol, as they most certainly are. However, the stages leading up to the face-to-face meeting allow for the emergence of incompatibility clues; this is why only about one-fourth of matches ever lead to a face-to-face meeting, according to the students we interviewed. One student said, "I know I haven't met up with anyone drunk, but I feel like I've gotten [dating app] messages late on a Saturday night where I'm assuming people are . . . which I would never answer to and I wouldn't go meet someone for the first time drunk the way that you would just at a party." Women tell us that they like this aspect because they can weed out bad actors from a distance, rather than confronting bad behavior in an uncomfortable or even dangerous face-to-face sexual situation.

Students describe the series of exchanges that follow a match as a low stakes way for them to try their "dating persona" out. One said, "So, I feel like in a certain way you kind of get a little bit of the thrill of I'm flirting and I'm kind of making my moves. And you get practice for then going and doing that in the real world, I would say." For some, this stage of the relationship may provide a safe space to communicate one's sexual boundaries, which have implications for building a culture of affirmative consent, a practice colleges struggle to inculcate among their student body as campus sexual assault has become an urgent, high-profile concern. One student told us these discussions, sometimes accompanied by sexting

and sending titillating videos or pictures of themselves to each other, are "a good place to talk about my limits with men, either sexually or romantically or platonically. Some guys are just there for sex, and that's totally in their right, but it's a really good place to be able to learn how to just say no to that in a situation where there's not someone literally in front of you to make you uncomfortable." Another student described how the "cyber-courting" period enabled a more natural progression to communicate her sexual desires, whereas during a random hookup stating her sexual parameters was too awkward. She explained, "I was really hard and fast about [saying] 'I'm literally okay with everything except this.' Having . . . those intermediary steps and people willing . . . to have these discussions beforehand made me feel a lot safer going into these situations." A gay Black student told us that he also makes his preferences clear before meeting. "I would just set a boundary in parentheses like, 'Oh, that's sexy.' In parentheses. 'I'm not very comfortable doing that for long periods of time,' or 'I've never done that before, but I might be open to trying.'" Another student told us these frank conversations cause heterosexual men using dating apps to "feel better, because I feel like we are really afraid of false allegations and that's not going to happen if you discuss everything beforehand." While clearly consent is an ongoing process and must be rearticulated in person, these narratives suggest that some students are using apps to engage in conversations about their sexual boundaries long before sexual interactions take place—in contrast to the pervasive silence around sexual preferences and consent in the hookup scene.

Most students we talked to described dating apps as a way to find both sexual pleasure and relationships.

Most students we talked to described dating apps as a way to find both sexual pleasure and relationships. On average, heterosexual students report having sex on their third date. Men often report that they would be up for "Netflix and chill" (sex) at first meeting, but, as one told us, "there's no such

thing as a hookup site for straight men and women, because straight women can turn any hookup site into a dating site." In this way, dating apps allow straight women more control in shaping the romantic dynamic and shifting the first meeting to neutral territory. Most men say women looking for a one-night

stand on dating apps are not very common. One joked: “It is so rare that when someone does do that, I’m like, this person is probably mentally unstable. So that I don’t go through with it—it’s scary and not how I wanna die.”

Speaking of safety, straight women describe the lengths they take to ensure that the first meeting is safe, even though they are dating fellow students. These precautions include taking screenshots of his dater profile and sharing it with friends, telling their friends where they will be, and giving them a time to expect them back. Others describe sneaking photos of their date’s face or license plate, or even having a group of friends secretly dine at the same venue to keep watch. Such safety measures point to the dark side of heterosexual romance, yet women paradoxically describe a feeling of empowerment by being able to control the location and context of their first meeting. For example, one Hispanic woman told us she feels safer online dating because “As a woman, at least you have more control. You could tell them, ‘Okay. I will meet you at this time, at this place.’ And you [the woman] can choose the place.” This control, she pointed out, contrasts to a bar or party situation where, “maybe they do something to [the] drink or maybe you’re just already really drunk

and they could try to pull you off somewhere, get handsy—you have a lot less control.”

Straight white men rarely volunteered concerns about their own safety. More often, they concern themselves with sending nonthreatening signals to their date to show that they are not a “creeper.” However, we noticed that men of color more often express concerns about safety, which may reflect their relative lack of entitlement to safety that straight white men take for granted. One straight Black dater told us that his worst fear would be to enter an unknown woman’s house only to be attacked and robbed by a group of men. Another straight black dater told us, firmly, that “men are victims, too” and explained how he also implements safety strategies, such as sharing his date location with a friend on “standby.” LGBTQ daters also discussed safety concerns; however, most stressed how online platforms had increased their sense of personal safety significantly. They provide a queer-friendly space in which to identify others, avoiding the danger of “putting themselves out there” publicly or running the risk of misidentifying someone. A few daters also told us that being able to make their trans status known in their profile significantly reduced their anxiety on the first date.

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Abstainers and Dabblers No More?

Our interviews indicate that many individuals, including those groups Lisa Wade called “abstainers” and “dabblers,” are using dating apps to seek romantic experiences that elude them in mainstream hookup culture. Among queer-identified students, we found that dating apps provide direct access to the queer community that is neither identifiable nor prevalent in typical college social scenes. Additionally, white and non-white queer students often describe the process of starting a dating profile in the

language of self-discovery. One white woman said, “I remember the day I switched it . . . to both. And then I ended up switching it only to women at one point, but that was like, ‘Wow, I’m doing this. I’m seeking this.’ That was validating it in a way.” Another white lesbian student who described herself as “straight as a nail” during her high school years, found the constant bombardment of overtly sexual messages from men to be off-putting. With time, however, she came to realize that her interests lie with women and now uses a women-only dating app, which she finds less “creepy.” A gender-non-binary student similarly

described their initial foray into online dating as the “first opportunity to be able to think of myself in a romantic or sexual context,” where they learned to articulate themselves as a desiring person.

Students of color, who sometimes describe feelings of isolation as racial minorities on largely white college campuses, use dating apps to expand their dating pool. A black lesbian student noted that dating apps provide her with a venue to meet people from her community and escape the whiteness of the campus party scene. Some people we interviewed found specialized dating apps to be especially empowering. For example, many heterosexual women prefer the woman-centered Bumble dating platform that requires them to initiate first contact with men. However, daters of color often experienced such niche websites to be white-centered and even exclusionary. While some report using minority-specific dating apps, such as Black People Meet, many minority daters told us they prefer nonspecialized dating apps for the exposure [to] greater overall diversity. One Hispanic woman said: “I like the diversity on Tinder a lot more. I have multiple different types of guys I like racially, and there’s a lot more racial diversity.” A straight black male student noted that he far prefers mainstream apps because there are more black women on the site: “There’s an app that I used awhile back and I was swiping for like two to three weeks or something like that and it was mostly white girls and none of them swiped for me. Only one black girl on there was matched to me. It definitely had to do with race.” Notably, black gay men told us they found the popular gay dating app, Grindr, to be far too white and rampant with the objectification of black bodies. Instead, they often use other mainstream apps and websites with more racial diversity and expanded profile content.

While certain dating apps may be more useful to some groups than others, we also found that racialized gender marginalization is particularly pronounced in a cyber setting, where the online disinhibition effect unveils individuals’ prejudices that are otherwise kept hidden. Indeed, many students of color we interviewed recounted receiving jarring messages filled with racialized sexual objectification,

a reality that largely differentiates their experiences from that of white users, queer or straight. In many ways, this illustrates the contradictions of the “new” college dating scene. On the one hand, racial, gender and sexual minority students often resort to using apps to bypass marginalized treatment in the college party scene; yet doing so often forces them to confront a jarring norm of openly expressed racial-sexual discrimination by some on these platforms.

In spite of this, many non-white daters described how dating apps provide them with a renewed opportunity to resist white hegemonic ideals of beauty in a hybridized public-private setting. For example, one student described to us how he includes afro-centric pictures to signal that he is primarily interested in black or like-minded women. As in Shantel Buggs’ 2017 work, our interviewees engage in racial politics in their vetting strategies for determining who is an appropriate match, such as pursuing daters whose profiles indicate support for the Black Lives Matter movement or avoiding those with pro-Trump symbolism. Other students expressed having initially started online dating with internalized white beauty standards only to find themselves re-asserting what they came to see as more culturally affirming and open racial preferences on dating apps. While it could certainly be the case that these preferences are shaped by the wider discrimination students of color encounter while using the apps, we also believe that these technologies are being leveraged in unique ways by marginalized groups to actively confront racial hierarchies of desire and identify themselves as desiring individuals on their own terms.

To augment our interview data with survey data on this phenomenon, we are collaborating with Paula England at NYU to renew the College Social Life survey, which ended in 2011. This survey was instrumental in documenting risky sexual behaviors among students at colleges and universities around the United States from the period 2005–2011. Our new survey module generates information about the role of dating apps and sexual interaction outcomes for comparison to non-dating app ways of meeting, such as vis-a-vis the party hookup scene, conventional dates, and in day-to-day campus interactions.

It is clear from research on college hookup culture that students long for more options; discontent with hookup culture is not new. Our archival research suggests that upon the advent of the world wide web, enterprising college students initially began to experiment with computerized dating programs just for this purpose. Between 1996 and 2002, college-specific dating programs such as Brown University's HUGS (Helping Undergraduates Socialize) dating service, Harvard's Datesite.com, Wesleyan's WesMatch.com, and Yale's Yalystation.com among others came into being at the same time that hookup culture was settling in as a normalized college social activity. Newspaper interviews with students during this period suggest that those early ventures were pockets of resistance to the mainstreaming of hookup culture. For example, when asked why he developed HUGS in a 1996 Providence Journal article entitled *Brown Students Now Meet Their Matches Online*, Brown undergraduate Rajib Chanda said he saw it as an antidote to the typical practice at Brown in which "you meet, get drunk, hook up and then either avoid eye contact the next day or find yourself in a relationship." He also hoped his dating program would remedy campus ethnic and racial segregation. Of WesMatch.com, its student founder said in

a 2004 New York Times article, *Are We a Match?:* "We're not just in it for hookups, we're trying to foster real relationships, real compatibility."

However, it would take almost two decades before online dating as a widespread practice swept college campuses. Landscape architects call the footpaths made by park-goers that veer off from paved pathways "desire paths." We believe that dating apps have become the symbolic desire path for many college students because they allow them the option to bypass the romantic gatekeeping that campus hookup party culture has dominated for so long. Our research suggests that students today are proactively using online dating technology to generate new rules of intimacy. While imperfect, the use of such tools has the potential to destabilize hookup culture and lead to new, potentially healthier and inclusive pathways to intimacy. The issue that future research must begin to address, then, is how might we make this new, unavoidably pervasive form of intimate meeting, enjoyable, and equally empowering, for all daters.

Source: Lundquist, J. H., & Curington, C. V. (2019). Love me Tinder, love me sweet: Reshaping the college hookup culture. *Contexts*, 18(4):22–27.

Reading 2.2

This brief article explores elite deviance or "corporate transgressions" through the concept of moral disengagement. The authors outline concepts and strategies that allow for corporate deviance to occur and why corporate deviants' consciences are not seemingly bothered. Strategies include moral justification (justifying the rightness of their actions), euphemistic labeling (changing the deviant status of an activity by changing its label to something innocuous or even positive), advantageous comparison (making something look better by comparing it to something much worse), displacement of responsibility (placing the blame elsewhere), diffusion of responsibility (taking less blame by placing it on the group), dehumanization (ascribing less-than-human qualities to the victims so they appear less deserving), and the attribution of blame (placing the blame on others or on certain circumstances). They then describe four famous case studies of elite deviance: (1) an industrial disaster in Bhopal, India, in 1984, where "at least 2,500 people were killed, 10,000 seriously injured, 20,000 partially disabled, and 180,000 others affected" in other ways; (2) the Ford Pinto case, in which faulty designs led to hundreds of burn deaths; (3) the Nestle case, in which the company sold infant

formula to Third World countries where environmental and social conditions interacted with the formula so that it was not good for the babies' health; and (4) the Three Mile Island case involving a devastating accident at a nuclear power plant and how it was dealt with by those in charge. The case examples show how corporations were able to disregard the consequences of their negligent and harmful behavior.

Corporate Transgressions Through Moral Disengagement*

Albert Bandura, Gian-Vittorio Caprara, and Laszlo Zsolnai

In the past decades corporate transgressions have become a major socio-political problem both in developed and developing countries. The phenomenon of corporate deviance requires critical, cross-disciplinary studies that might illuminate the darker side of contemporary business practice. We have to acknowledge that one is dealing with institutional practices that are not easily examinable by conventional means. Study of corporate transgressions is highly reliant on scandals, the media, public inquiries, police investigations and whistle-blowers for glimpses of the concealed world of top management and its involvement in dirty tricks. Much research relies therefore on published secondary sources.¹

Corporate transgression is about the exercise and abuse of power that is closely linked to the legitimate conduct of business. The essence of business is pursuit of legitimate interests of the parties involved in transactions circumscribed by rules that protect both the parties and their relationship to the interests of the public, society, state and regulatory agencies.²

Although a great deal of corporate transgression is never classified as crime and the law plays a minor role in its regulation, the greatest discrepancy between common and white-collar violations is that corporations have the power to mobilize resources to influence the rules that cover their own conduct. In many cases corporations actively defend their interests in ways that would normally be unthinkable for common law breakers.³

The most striking aspect of corporate transgression is that it is committed not by dangerous criminally-oriented mavericks, but by eminent members

of the business community who break rules ostensibly in the interests of their companies and their own.⁴ The challenging question is why otherwise good managers engage in dirty business and why their conscience never bothers them.⁵ In this article we draw on the theory and empirical findings of moral psychology to shed some light on this paradox.

Social Cognitive Theory of Moral Agency

Social cognitive theory addresses the exercise of moral agency.⁶ In this explanatory framework personal factors in the form of moral thought and self-evaluative reactions, moral conduct and environmental influences operate as interacting determinants of each other. Within this triadic reciprocal causation, moral agency is exercised through self-regulatory mechanisms. Transgressive conduct is regulated by two sets of sanctions, social and personal. Social sanctions are rooted in the fear of external punishment, while self-sanctions operate through self-condemning reactions to one's misconduct. After people adopt moral standards, self-sanctions serve as the main guides and deterrents that keep behaviour in line with moral standards.

The adoption of moral standards does not create a fixed control mechanism within the person. There are many psycho-social mechanisms by which moral control can be selectively engaged or disengaged from detrimental conduct.⁷ The mechanisms of moral disengagement enable otherwise considerate people to commit transgressive acts without experiencing personal distress.

*Some text and accompanying endnotes have been omitted. Please consult the original source.

Moral Justification

People do not ordinarily engage in reprehensible conduct until they have justified to themselves the rightness of their actions. In this process of moral justification, detrimental conduct is made personally and socially acceptable by portraying it in the service of valued social or moral purposes.

Euphemistic Labelling

Activities can take on markedly different appearances depending on what they are called. Euphemistic labelling provides a convenient tool for masking reprehensible activities or even conferring a respectable status upon them. Through sanitized and convoluted verbiage, destructive conduct is made benign and those who engage in it are relieved of a sense of personal agency.

Advantageous Comparison

Behaviour can also assume very different qualities depending on what it is contrasted with. By exploiting advantageous comparison, injurious conduct can be rendered benign or made to appear to be of little consequence. The more flagrant the contrasted activities, the more likely it is that one's own injurious conduct will appear trifling or even benevolent.

Displacement of Responsibility

Under displacement of responsibility people view their actions as springing from social pressures or dictates of others rather than as something for which they are personally responsible. Because they are not the actual agents of their actions, they are spared self-censuring reactions. Hence, they are willing to behave in ways they normally repudiate if a legitimate authority accepts responsibility for the effects of their actions.

Diffusion of Responsibility

The exercise of moral control is also weakened when personal agency is obscured by diffusion of responsibility for detrimental conduct. Any harm done by a

group can always be attributed largely to the behaviour of others. People behave more cruelly under group responsibility than when they hold themselves personally accountable for their actions.

Disregarding or Distorting the Consequences

Additional ways of weakening self-detering reactions operate by disregarding or distorting the consequences of action. When people pursue activities harmful to others for personal gain or because of social inducements they avoid facing the harm they cause or they minimize it. In addition to selective inattention and cognitive distortion of effects, the misrepresentation may involve active efforts to discredit evidence of the harm that is caused.

Dehumanization

Self-censure for injurious conduct can be disengaged or blunted by dehumanization that divests people of human qualities or attributes bestial qualities to them. Once dehumanized, they are no longer viewed as persons with feelings, hopes, and concerns, but as subhuman objects.

Attribution of Blame

Blaming one's adversaries or compelling circumstances is still another expedient that can serve self-exonerating purposes. In moral disengagement by attribution of blame, people view themselves as faultless victims driven to injurious conduct by forcible provocation. By fixing the blame on others or on circumstances, not only are one's own injurious actions excusable, but one can even feel self-righteous in the process.

Moral disengagement can affect detrimental behaviour both directly and indirectly. People have little reason to be troubled by guilt or to feel any need to make amends for harmful conduct if they construe it as serving worthy purposes or if they disown personal agency for it. High moral disengagement is accompanied by low guilt, thus weakening anticipatory self-restraints against engagement in

detrimental behaviour. Self-exoneration for harmful conduct and self-protective dehumanization of others and treating them as blameworthy spawn a low pro-social orientation. Low pro-socialness in turn contributes to detrimental conduct in two ways: having little sympathy for others both removes the restraining influence of empathetic consideration of others and activates little anticipatory guilt over injurious conduct; and under some circumstances effective moral disengagement creates a sense of social rectitude and self-righteousness that breeds ruminative hostility and retaliatory thoughts for perceived grievances.

Moral Disengagement Strategies of Corporations

A corporation is similar to a person in some important respects. First, the reciprocal causation operates among corporate modes of thinking, corporate behaviour and the environment. Second, a corporation can be viewed both as a social construction and as an agentic system with the power to realize its intentions. Third, corporate identity is crucial for the development and functioning of a corporation. Moreover, the practices of a corporation operate through self-regulatory mechanisms. These mechanisms regulate the allocation of resources in the pursuit of the goals and objectives of the corporation in accordance with its values and standards. When corporations engage in reprehensible conduct they are likely to do so through selective disengagement of moral self-sanctions. The following brief analyses of famous business ethics cases illustrate the disengagement practices.

The Bhopal Case⁸

On 3 December 1984 the world's worst industrial disaster happened in Bhopal, India. Some 40 tonnes of methyl isocyanate (MIC) gas escaped from the Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL) pesticide production plant. At least 2,500 people were killed, 10,000 seriously injured, 20,000 partially disabled and 180,000 others affected in one way or another.

Very early in the morning of that day a violent chemical reaction occurred in a large storage tank at the Union Carbide factory. A huge amount of MIC—a chemical so highly reactive that a trace contaminant can set off a chain reaction—escaped from the tank into the cool winter's night air. A yellow-white fog, an aerosol of uncertain chemical composition, spread over the sleeping city of some 800,000. The mist, which hung close to the ground, blanketed the slums of Bhopal. Hundreds of thousands of residents were roused from their sleep, coughing, vomiting, and wheezing.

The Bhopal plant was operated by UCIL, a subsidiary of the Union Carbide Corporation headquartered in Danbury, Connecticut. Despite Indian law limiting foreign ownership of corporations to 40 per cent, the US parent company was allowed to retain majority ownership (50.9 per cent) of UCIL because it was considered a 'high-technology' enterprise.

Union Carbide officials claimed that they did not apply a 'double standard' in safety regulation. Warren Anderson, chairman of Union Carbide Corporation, insisted that there were no differences between the Bhopal plant and Union Carbide's West Virginia plant. This argument was erroneous but served as an advantageous comparison for Union Carbide. In reality, the Bhopal plant had violated the company's safety standards and operated in a way that would not have been tolerated in the United States.

Two years before the disaster a three-member safety team from Union Carbide headquarters had visited the Bhopal plant and submitted a revealing report on the dangers of the MIC section. The report had recommended various changes to reduce the risks at the plant, but the recommendations were never implemented. Union Carbide's main strategy was to displace responsibility by blaming the Indian government for its failure to effectively regulate the plant and for allowing people to live nearby.

Union Carbide was allowed to locate its factory in the middle of Bhopal, just 2 miles from the Bhopal railway station. It was convenient for shipping, but

proved to be disastrous for the people living nearby. For years the plant had been ringed with shantytowns, mostly populated by squatters. All three of the worst-affected communities in the disaster apparently existed before the Union Carbide plant opened. In court trials Union Carbide refused to pay anything to the Indian victims and their families, whose impoverished status made them easy to be dehumanized and disregarded.

The Ford Pinto Case⁹

On 10 August 1978 a tragic automobile accident occurred on US Highway 33 near Goshen, Indiana. Sisters Judy and Lynn Ulrich and their cousin Donna Ulrich were struck from the rear in their 1973 Ford Pinto by a van. The gas tank of the Pinto ruptured, the car burst into flames and the three teenagers were burnt to death.

This was not the only case when the Ford Pinto caused a serious accident by explosion. By conservative estimates Pinto crashes had caused at least 500 burn deaths. There were lawsuits against Ford because it had been proven that the top managers of the company were informed about the serious design problem of the model. Despite the warnings of their engineers, the Ford management decided to manufacture and sell the car with the dangerously defective design.

Ford used different moral disengagement strategies to defend its highly controversial decision. First, Ford continuously claimed that the 'Pinto is safe,' thus denying the risk of injurious consequences. Ford managers justified their claim by referring to the US safety regulation standards in effect till 1977. In doing so they displaced their responsibility for a car that caused hundreds of deaths to the driving practices of people who would not have been seriously injured if their Ford Pinto had not been designed in a way that made it easily inflammable in a collision.

Ford engineers concluded that the safety problem of the Pinto could be solved by a minor technological adjustment. It would have cost only \$11 per

car to prevent the gas tank from rupturing so easily. Ford produced an intriguing and controversial cost-benefit analysis study to prove that this modification was not cost effective to society. The study provided social justification for not making that option available to customers.

Ford convinced itself that it was better to pay millions of dollars in Pinto jury trials and out-of-court settlements than to improve the safety of the model. By placing dollar values on human life and suffering, Ford simply disregarded the consequences of its practice relating to the safety of millions of customers.

The Nestle Case¹⁰

Nestle has been the largest producer and seller of infant formula products in Third World countries. Its marketing practices received worldwide criticism during the seventies and eighties. Infant formula is not harmful to the consumer when used properly under appropriate conditions. However, it is a demanding product that can be harmful to users when risk conditions are present. Nestle sold its infant formula to mothers in Africa, Latin America and South Asia, many of whom lived under circumstances that made the use of such products a highly risky practice.

First, infant formula must be sold in powdered form in tropical environments, requiring that mothers mix the powder with locally available water. When water supplies are of poor quality, as they are in many developing countries, infants are exposed to disease. Second, since the product must be mixed, preparation instructions are important and mothers must be able to read them. However, the rate of female illiteracy is very high in many developing nations. Third, since infant formulas are relatively expensive to purchase there is a temptation to overdilute the powder with water. Unfortunately, overdiluted formula preparations provide very poor nutrition for infants. Having decided to bottle-feed their babies in order to increase their chances for a healthy life, many mothers discovered to their horror that they had actually been infecting and starving their infants.

During the late seventies, the infant formula controversy became increasingly politicized in Europe and the United States. A Swiss public action group labelled Nestle as the 'baby killer.' Others claimed that Nestle causes 'commerciogenic malnutrition' in Third World countries—malnutrition brought about because of its commercial practices. In 1978 a powerful consumer boycott of Nestle and its products was begun in the United States.

The company's representatives charged that the boycott was a conspiracy of religious organizations and an indirect attack on the free enterprise system. Nestle tried to defend and morally justify its questionable marketing practice by referring to the freedom of production and marketing. The Nestle statement was a political disaster. The company was denounced for its foolishness in the US media.

Companies may not close their eyes once their product is sold. They have a continuing responsibility to monitor the product's use, resale and consumption to determine who are actually using the product and how they are using it. Post-marketing reviews are a necessary step in this process. In 1978 Nestle confessed that like other companies in the industry it did no such research and did not know who actually used its products and the manner in which they did so. In this negligent attitude towards learning about the effects of its product, Nestle was acting on the strategy of disregarding the harmful consequences of its practice in developing countries.

In 1984 Nestle's self-discrediting experience with the controversy over its infant formula finally came to an end by adopting the policy recommendations of the WHO international marketing code. However, the company and the morale of its employees suffered a major blow. It is difficult to say how long it will take for Nestle to regain its good name and for the public to regard the company once again as a good corporate citizen.

The Three Mile Island Case¹¹

The most severe accident in US commercial nuclear power plant history occurred at the Three Mile

Island Unit 2 in Harrisburg on 28 March 1979. People were told to stay indoors and pregnant mothers and small children were advised to leave the area. There were widespread rumours of a general evacuation. Indeed, some 100,000 people simply voted with their feet and got up and left the area. Although there were no direct deaths or injuries, there was talk of a possible explosion equivalent to a 1-megaton bomb. There were 4 million litres of contaminated water blown out of the system. Figures for the clean-up were initially set at somewhere between \$200 and \$500 million. Ten years later the cleaning was still continuing.

Babcock and Wilcox built the reactor, General Public Utilities ran Three Mile Island, and Metropolitan Edison owned it. During and after the event, Metropolitan Edison simply refused to face up to the seriousness of the situation. The company tried to distort consequences by continually issuing denials and minimizing the accident. In effect, the public was told there was no problem, no danger, and everything was routine. They also used euphemisms and displacement of responsibility to 'operator error' in providing a public explanation that tended to play down the seriousness of the accident.¹²

Later on, Metropolitan Edison made strong efforts to diffuse responsibility among the other main actors involved, namely, Babcock and Wilcox, General Public Utilities and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. All endeavoured to avoid blame for the accident in which the United States had just narrowly escaped its Chernobyl.

Table 1 shows the moral disengagement mechanisms used in the analyzed cases. The listed ones probably underestimate the scope of the mechanisms employed because they are confined to publicly observable manifestations of moral disengagement. The enlistment of exonerative practices is often buried in corporate memos and surreptitious sanctioning practices rather than being publicly expressed.

What is informative in these cases is that the moral collusion can end in justifying actions whose outcomes continue to be disapproved. The belief system of the corporation may remain unaffected

Table 1 Disengagement Mechanisms Used in Different Business Ethics Cases

Disengagement Mechanisms	Bhopal Case	Ford Pinto Case	Nestle Case	Three Mile Island Case
Moral justification		✓	✓	
Euphemistic labelling				✓
Advantageous comparison	✓			
Displacement of responsibility		✓		
Diffusion of responsibility				✓
Disregarding or distorting the consequences		✓	✓	✓
Dehumanization	✓			
Attribution of blame	✓			

for a long time by practices that are detrimental to it as well as to the general public. Selective disengagement mechanisms are deployed to mask such a contradiction and to perpetuate harmful corporate practices. . . .

Implications for Business Ethics

When the mechanisms of moral disengagement are at work in corporations, business ethics are difficult to manage, especially when the sanctioning practices are surreptitious and the responsibility for policies is diffused. Numerous exonerative strategies can be enlisted to disengage social and moral sanctions from detrimental practices with a low sense of personal accountability. A central issue is how to counteract moral disengagement strategies of corporations.

From the perspective of business ethics, there are several strategies for counteracting resort to moral disengagement. One approach is to monitor and publicize corporate practices that have detrimental human effects. The more visible the consequences are on the affected parties for the decision makers, the less likely it is that they can be disregarded, distorted or minimized for long. Another approach

is to increase transparency of the discourse by which the deliberation of corporate policies and practices are born. The more public the discourse about corporate decisions and policies, the less likely are corporate managers to justify the reprehensible conduct of their organizations.

Diffused and ambiguous responsibility structures make it easy to discount personal contribution to harmful effects. Instituting clear lines of accountability curtail moral disengagement. Exposing sanitizing language that masks reprehensible practices is still another corrective. The affected parties often lack social influence and status that make it easy to dehumanize and disregard them. They need to be personalized and their concerns publicized and addressed.

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